

Fall 2017

Theatre UNI Alumni Newsletter, Fall 2017-Spring 2018

University of Northern Iowa. Department of Theatre.

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THEATRE UNI ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

Fall 2017 - Spring 2018

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Theatre UNI production of *INTO THE WOODS*

THEATREUNI

AT STRAYER-WOOD ♦ University of Northern Iowa

MEMBER OF NAST - NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS OF THEATRE

A LETTER FROM THE DEPARTMENT HEAD



Greetings from Cedar Falls and Theatre UNI!

I'm excited to share the information in this newsletter with you, and I hope you find some things in here that helps you "re-connect" to Theatre UNI!

The Department of Theatre is definitely in a period of some change. You'll see further down that there have been two recent faculty retirements - and another one coming in December. Additionally, Jordan Andrews, who has been an excellent Production Manager for Theatre UNI since August of 2014, will be moving to Seattle to pursue opportunities there in May. We will be searching for someone to fill that position in the coming months. We have been fortunate to hire one new faculty member (also profiled further down!) and hope to move forward with other hires soon.

We continue to host the Iowa Thespians Festival each year - and have contracted with them to keep coming to UNI until at least 2020. Our student population remains strong, and our productions are well-received in the community and providing real growth in the students.

Next year we will take on a new type of theatre experience: Immersion Theatre.

Inspired by the 50th anniversary of the moon landing, this will be a devised project directed by Gretta Berghammer. The "show" will involve creating an installed environment in the Bertha Martin Theater, and small groups (approximately 20) being led through in a roughly 30-minute experience. There will be three "different" environments—so someone could come three different times and get a unique experience each time.

The Strayer-Wood Theatre will be undergoing a major renovation of the lighting system this summer. In August, we will be moving into a new on-campus storage facility provided by the university.

2020 – that's the year to keep your eye on for the next reunion! We have not finalized a date yet – but we will be picking that season before too long, and hope to tie the reunion to one of the shows during that Spring semester.

We value our connection to our alumni, and hope that this newsletter reaches as many of you as possible!

Be well – and please let us hear from you!

Eric Lange

Department Head, Theatre

Artistic Director, Theatre UNI

NEW FACULTY MEMBER

Amy Osatinski started teaching in our department this semester! She comes from the Denver area, and we're very happy to have her on the faculty. She'll direct her first show this year—our production of *Hair* in the spring! Amy has created this short video to introduce herself to you:

[CLICK HERE TO MEET AMY](#)

THE BEST WEEK OF MY LIFE

JON DANKER

Jon Danker loves the theatre! He also enjoys musicals (*RENT* is his favorite,) Disney movies (he has seen *Zootopia* more times than he can count,) making videos, and a variety of computer games.

And Jon has autism.

Jon was born in 1992. Autism Spectrum Disorder was just beginning to emerge as a significant cognitive disorder in children, especially boys. Little was known about autism at the time of his diagnosis in the mid 90's; programs designed to meet the needs of these learners were scarce. His parents struggled to find after-school enrichment programs that would not only be inclusive of their son, but would help him thrive.

All that changed in 2006 when Jon found his way into an after-school drama program at Bunger Middle School that was being offered by UNI Theatre professor Gretta Berghammer. It was life changing for both of them. Jon found a place where his gifts and abilities could make valuable contributions; a place where he could interact with others and begin to make friends as they collaborated to make theatre. Gretta recognized a need in the profession of youth theatre to make programming more accessible and responsive to the needs of youth with autism. The more Jon's passion for learning about, participating in, and experiencing live theatre grew, the more Gretta worked to enlarge her programs to be more inclusive and responsive to the needs of Jon and others with autism. The result...the Department of Theatre's Spectrum Theatre program, and nationally recognized work in drama and theatre education for youth with developmental delays, including autism, in both production and classroom teaching.

Jon's collaboration with the Spectrum Theatre continues to this day. Initially he was a member of the acting company; as he grew older, his interest in technical theatre and production took "center stage." Since 2010 Jon has been a paid employee of the Sturgis Youth Theatre, working on summer productions as well as serving as a teaching associate for the inclusion based Spectrum

Theatre Play in a Day Workshops Gretta offers throughout the school year.

When Jon confided to Gretta that his "dream" was to go out on tour with a production, she began to percolate how the Department of Theatre could make it come true. With the support of Eric Lange, Jordan Andrews and Mark Parrot, Jon was invited to become a paid "road technician" as a member of the *Palette of Possibility* production tour, a life event that Jon refers to as "The Best Week of My Life."

When I asked Jon what made it so great, he flashed me one of his huge thousand watt smiles and said,

"Because I got to be with a group of people and be a valued part of that group. I met new people, I got to see new places, I was one of them, one of the ensemble. I loved being on the road, sharing stories and conversations with others as we traveled by van to all the different schools and theatres. I just loved the whole experience."

It was also the first time Jon traveled away from home without his parents, a life event that everyone else in the company had done well before the age of 25. As Gretta and others worked to put the tour schedule together, Jon and his Job Coach, Katie Kimber, worked to translate that schedule into a format that would help Jon plan for each day, including prompts to help him remember to set his alarm clock and strategies for budgeting his daily meal per diem. Katie was excited by the challenge of helping Jon plan for seven full days on the road. She viewed the tour as a fabulous opportunity for Jon to build friendships and experience new social situations that he would never otherwise encounter.

Highlights of the tour for Jon, aside from life on the road with a group of 12 other committed and passionate theatre artists, included the variety of each performance space, watching the reaction of young people with autism as they interacted with the play, and two days in downtown Des Moines. "I got to go to Zombie Burger...I have always wanted to go to Zombie Burger. We also went to Ray Gun and Tacopocalypse."

When I asked Jon if there was a message he wanted to share with others reading this article, he paused for just a bit. "As an older person with autism I feel proud to pass the torch, to pave the way to help get more kids involved in theatre. And to let them know that you can be a part of theatre at any age. No matter how different you are, if you have a disability, you can do theatre. Theatre makes a place for everyone."

LEARN ABOUT THE *PALETTE OF POSSIBILITY* TOUR

MAGICAL MOMENTS IN LIGHTING

AN INTERVIEW WITH CHRIS ANDERSEN

BY CYNTHIA GOATLEY

Chris Andersen ('17) was my lighting designer for *Dead Man's Cell Phone* [DMCP] in the fall of 2016. Recently, we had a phone conversation about his time at UNI, his love for lighting design, the DMCP process, and his current status.

CG: Chris. It's Cynthia. Thanks so much for taking time to talk with me today. I have missed our interactions.

CA: It's good to hear from someone at UNI.

CG: Your area of emphasis at UNI was Design and Production. Did you come to UNI knowing you wanted to be a Theatre major?

CA: Yes. I had my Associates degree in Technical Theatre. I did think about doing a minor in computers at one time, but the scheduling didn't work out.

CG: Where did you get your Associate degree?

CA: From Iowa Western Community College, Council Bluffs.

CG: Why did you chose lighting design for your area? What do you like about it?

CA: I enjoy all the areas of lighting from the electrical work, to the programming, to designing a show. I really like the mix lighting design gives you incorporating art and technology together. It also allows me as the designer to analyze the script for clues to the story, and how I can help the audience understand it. I chose lighting design because as a designer it allows me to create magical moments in a show.

CG: I want to come back to your creation of magical moments, particularly in DMCP, in a minute. First, tell me how you became the designer for DMCP.

CA: I was an assistant designer for a show before DMCP which allowed me to apply for the lighting designer position. I then gave a design presentation for the show and was approved as the designer.

CG: How do you begin your design process for a show?

CA: When I first start on the design process, I try to match colors to the emotions I feel in the script.

CG: What was the most difficult thing about *Dead Man's Cell Phone*?

CA: Working in an arena style theatre. I was always adjusting angles of lights so everyone could see and so light wasn't shining in someone else's eyes across the room.

CG: Yes, arena staging is difficult. Do you feel you successfully conquered that problem?



CA: I think I did. But, I was never happy with the shadows. It seemed like there were a lot of shadows, and I was always trying to fix it. Looking back, I realize it wasn't as bad as I thought it was.

CG: What was the most enjoyable aspect of the work?

CA: I liked the amount of brainstorming that was involved in the show, especially being able to light the paper houses in the show. It took so much trial and error to get the houses to work like I wanted.

[Note from CG: At the end of the first act, there is a moment when the two lead characters kiss. They both have a great love of paper, and this kiss happens in the back of a stationary store. Paper drops from above as paper houses, designed by student Megan Coffel, descend.]

CG: Now, since you mentioned the houses, let's get back to "magical moments." What were those for you in DMCP?

CA: The lighting for the paper drop. The characters were secluded for a moment before the paper houses with lights inside came down.

CG: Where did you get your lighting idea for that moment

CA: Leonard Curtis, [set designer] had presented an image of a little house with the starry night above it. The impulse came from that.

CG: It was a lovely moment.

CA: Thank you.

CG: When looking back at the project, what is your assessment of it?

CA: I am a lot happier with my work now looking back on it than I was at the time of the show. While working on it, I constantly seemed to be picking at things I didn't like and it was hard to see the good parts in it.

CG: I remember. You were always adjusting, refining. That's what made it so good to work with you. You kept working to make it better. What are you doing now, Chris?

CA: I am working in a school district as a technology assistant, and I also help the high school with the shows they perform in the auditorium. I also help out at a local community theater on the shows they perform.

CG: How is it going?

CA: Last week was my first week. It was really overwhelming at first. I'm supposed to be in the middle school, but in the training, they have me working with the head guy at the high school ... Every single day there is a steady stream of people wanting help and things fixed. I thought at first, I couldn't do this job ... Towards the end of the week, it got a lot better. You sit behind a desk all day behind a computer. You get back at night and you are completely exhausted.

CG: Chris, I've worked with you and know you are definitely up to any challenges. Thanks so much for talking with me.

CA: You're welcome.

A CORNERSTONE PROJECT OF THEATRE UNI

BY JENNIFER SHESHKO, KATRINA SANDVIK AND MATTHEW WEEDMAN

For almost the past decade, Theatre UNI has dramatized the common read for the Cornerstone freshman intake course, a class developed with the Reaching For Higher Ground initiative. These productions for Cornerstone have taken many different forms over the years: an actual adaptation of their common read, an existing piece of theater related in theme to their reading, and more recently a devised piece inspired from their text. These productions have been offered as a part of our departmental season or as extra presentations early in our semesters.

For the last two years, we have dramatized a selection of the Cornerstone reading and performed back-to-back presentations in the second week of school for the various class sections. Each performance was followed by a brief talk-back in which the actors, director and designers could engage with the audience

This workshop utilized the talents of seven students: Callie Baack, Madison Fairbanks, Kendra Gliem, Integrity Narcisse, Cooper Patterson, Keegan Patterson, and Alexandra Stickels (also the stage manager.) Utilizing writing prompts from themes of the text, acting exercises, research, and the students' own personal experiences Matt created a script. While many of these students were all performers, they also had or developed the skills to hang and focus lights, construct and paint the set, and to help craft the costumes. They held total ownership over this production.

As Matt worked with the students to write the text, Jenn and Ron designed the scenery, costumes, lights, and projections. Inspired by the writing and drawings taken from "Wear Areas," the scenic design was based on outlines of the students' bodies. After tracing and cutting out each silhouette onto masonite stencils, Jenn and Ron showed the cast how to paint the floor, which was the main scenic element. As Matt took the writings of the students and crafted a text, Jenn and Ron created numerous projections for the background. These projections were sourced from the students' research and highlighted the themes of body image awareness, sexuality, personal history, racism, and fear found in the texts.



about the piece, its content, and its creation.

Outlines/Shadows

In 2016, director Matthew Weedman was tasked with devising a short theatrical piece based on two readings from the Best American Nonrequired Reading of 2015: Claudia Rankine's poem "Driving in The Car in the Dark" and "Wear Areas," a chapter from *Women in Clothes* by Sheila Heti, Heidi Julavits, and Leanne Shapton. Aided by fellow faculty members Jennifer Sheshko Wood and Ron Koinzan, Matt ran a two-week long workshop to develop the script and the production based on these readings.

American/Citizen

In 2017, Matt took on the role of director once more, with faculty members Jordan Kelly Andrews and Katrina Sandvik as the design team. They facilitated another two-week long workshop with students Callie Baack, Patrick Hale, Haleigh Kent, Madison Knaack (also the stage manager,) Integrity Narcisse, Jakob Reha, and Mikayla Wahl.

American/Citizen focused on a sense of community and what it meant to be a member of society, as seen through two texts that identified issues prevalent within those societies. This year's texts were taken from *The Best American Nonrequired Reading*



of 2017. "The Lonely Death of George Bell" by N.R. Kleinfield centered on a man who lived and died in New York, illuminating the network of people needed to settle the estate of a person without family or friends. Second was Kyle Boelte's "Reluctant Citizens," a story seen through the eyes of twelve jurors, speaking on whether a society needs to help everyone in it regardless of their level of social contribution.

Matt led the cast through various acting exercises and writing prompts from which he created the script. Jordan took inspiration for the scenic design from a writing exercise done with chalk on the floor. To create this main scenic element, Jordan and Katrina supervised the cast in painting the stage floor, then cutting stencils and painting keywords pulled from the ideas and issues discussed in the production. Projections created from photos provided by the cast were used to help underline and illustrate their performances. Katrina took inspiration from the ideas of community, individuality and self- image found in the original stories and those of the cast for the costume design. At the end of the performance week, a single public performance was held with an audience of about 80 people from the community.

During the time Theatre UNI has supported the Cornerstone classes with these productions, feedback from professors has been positive as they appreciate another lens through which to discuss the common read. Connecting the themes of these stories to the real life experiences of our own students has resonated with the Cornerstone population. Some students connect deeply with the issues portrayed, while others feel alienated, but they all go away with something to talk about.

INTO THE WOODS PRODUCTION COLLABORATION

In April of 2017, Theatre UNI collaborated with UNI's School of Music and the Gallagher Bluedorn Performing Arts Center to produce *Into the Woods*. The show played to nearly sold-out audiences!

Sean Urbantke was our guest Scenic Designer for *Into The Woods*. He holds an MFA in Scenic Design from The University of Maryland College Park, in College Park MD.

He was challenged with creating an environment that could fill the GBPAC, allow for the orchestra to be on stage and still have ample space for the actors to move around and tell the story. He created an athletic, intense, and sprawling environment for these character to traverse. Our "woods" became hard, extreme-scaled pieces of musical instruments, soft, flowing pieces of fabric, and the orchestra itself.

The final product was a dramatic playscape for actors, lighting, and projections designers to play on. The set was as physically demanding to act on as it was beautiful, giving both our performance and our production/design students a new and dynamic experience. Other examples of Sean's creative work can be seen at www.SeanUrbantke.com

Projected imagery was a very important part of the production. We were fortunate to make an association with guest artist Kristen Geisler, a lighting and projections designer based in Mt. Vernon, IA. She holds an MFA in lighting design from the University of Tennessee, and currently works as an AV/Lighting Specialist at Hancher Auditorium in Iowa City. Kristen utilized recorded video, live video and a beautiful selection of still images to enhance the stage environment and establish a multitude of locations for the show. Other examples of Kristen's creative work can be seen at KristenGeisler.com.

From choreographer Mandy Masmar:

Being able to work with the students who were primarily beginning level movers was a wonderful experience; since I'm also an instructor of dance, it's always rewarding to see how far the students come not only in ability, but also in confidence level. This production was an exciting challenge that I was extremely eager to take on; the large cast size, ability level, the giant set, performing in the Great Hall, and so much more made the process a bit tricky at times, which made it all the more enjoyable. Working with this entire team of professionals and students really made the project a special one.

From Vocal Coach Mitra Sadeghpour:

As the vocal coach, I loved coming in and working with singing actors who were beautifully prepared by Dr. Burkhardt and show pianist Seth Butler. I get to do the fun part: working with text, inflection, subtext, articulation, and also helping singers navigate difficult vocal passages. I consider it essential to teach students how to safely and healthily use their voice to communicate in the style of the show, and give them solid, basic vocal information they can continue to use to make future singing experiences successful.

From Music Director Rebecca Burkhardt:

I enjoyed employing a larger orchestra for the ensemble and being on the stage. The Great Hall is a wonderful venue for singing and for orchestra so the sound was terrific!

From Sound Designer Shawn Poellet:

I enjoyed the opportunity to work with some of the best people in all three departments to produce a show of a scale and quality that I have not yet seen at UNI. As part of this show I was also glad to be able to work with new students that I had not previously had the opportunity to interact with. Producing a large show in the Great Hall has been a long time goal of mine and I was thrilled to see it happen!

From Lighting Designer Chris Tuzicka:

The expression "it takes a village" really, in the case of *Into the Woods*, needs to be "it takes a kingdom." The students, faculty, designers, and staff had to work in a time frame and space that they may not have been used to and that provides its own challenges on top of the normal challenges of getting a production off the ground. It was a great amount of fun to see the students take on that challenge and in a lot of cases meet and exceed it.

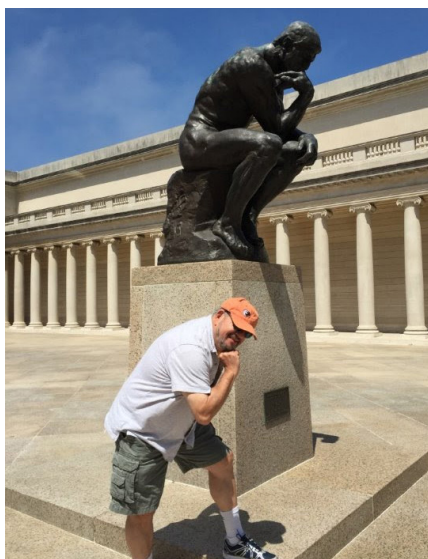
[CLICK HERE TO SEE MORE](#)



JAY EDELNANT & LEONARD CURTIS

CAREER PROFILES

JAY EDELNANT received his doctorate in Performance Studies from Northwestern University in 1980 after having started his teaching career at UNI in 1972. He retired after 45 years of creative collaborations, brilliant directing and acting, stimulating teaching, progressive thinking, innovative curriculum development, social awareness, and inclusion. Jay taught a variety of classes in the department including Theatrical Makeup, Directing, Aesthetics, and Playscript Analysis. He directed plays of all stripes in the Bertha Martin Theatre, on the mainstage of the Strayer-Wood Theatre, in found spaces like the courtyard, and staged readings in the “Off Hudson Series”. He was never one to shy away from a new idea or an unusual approach. Jay was a prolific actor and director; his projects are almost too expansive to count. His Theatre UNI resume includes directing such productions as *Angels in America: A Gay Fantasia on National Themes*, *The Imaginary Invalid*, *Sh**faced*, an original touring production about binge drinking, *Sueño*, *Fortinbras Gets Drunk*, *November*, and *Love and Information*. He directed many musicals including *Hair*, *Assassins*, *Spring Awakening*, *Urinetown*, and his swan song—*Into the Woods*. He also worked his magic at the Ridotto Players (Chicago,) Chicago Opera Theatre, Timberlake Playhouse (Mt. Carroll, IL,) Boars Head Players (Fayetteville, AR,) Theatre West (Scottsbluff, NE,) and Theatre L’Homme Dieu (Alexandria, MN.)



Jay also has national stature from his many years of theatre artistry. He served as National Chair of the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival (KCACTF.) He was a founding editor of the national theatre journal *Theatre Topics*. He has served as a member of the National Endowment for the Arts Theatre Panel and has been the recipient of the John F. Kennedy Center Medallion. His face and voice are well known to many in the Cedar Valley. He could be heard in many local commercials, public service announcements, and as one of the voices of UNI commencement ceremonies.

Jay was best known for his pithy phrases and gestures. We all remember the ever-expanding hand waves of depth and understanding that would represent our Art: Acting, Directing, and Theatre. Others—well at least one—described him as an “intellectual in a baseball cap.” Also, we could never forget to “Read the Damn Play!”

LEONARD CURTIS arrived at UNI in 1993 from the University of Iowa, full of ideas, high artistic standards, and creative solutions amidst old-world techniques for scenic designing, building, painting and embellishing sets in all of the Theatre UNI spaces.

Some of his most memorable scenic designs at Theater UNI include, *A Little Night Music*, *The Imaginary Invalid*, *Cabaret*, *Angels in America*, *Summer and Smoke*, *In the Heart of America*, *A Ddybuk*, *The Music Lesson*, *Sueño*, *The Laramie Project*, *Count Dracula*, and *Eurydice*. Leonard designed *Macbeth*, a final production for fellow UNI Theatre colleague and icon, George Glenn. Leonard was tireless in designing amazing sets for countless operas (*The Crucible*, *The Merry Widow*, *Die Fledermaus*, *The Elixir of Love*) and the beautiful three-story house for *August: Osage County*. His swan song scenic design was for *Dead Man’s Cell Phone*.

Professor Curtis has worked as a guest artist and instructor at Coe College, Cornell College, Grinnell College, Indiana State University, and the University of Iowa. Professional credits include scenic artist appointments at Missouri Repertory Theatre in Kansas City, and design appointments at the University

of Iowa Summer Repertory Theatre. In 2005, the publication *Backstage* featured Professor Curtis among theatre artists contributing to important summer theatre training opportunities in the Midwest. He provided great support and expertise to the success of Marshalltown’s Orpheum Theatre by assisting designer Pip Gordon with productions of *Foxfire* and *Something’s Afoot*.



Leonard owns several properties, all of which he is in the process of restoring, including a “Folk Victorian house with Second Empire details” in his hometown of Webster City, the future home of Essex House Gallery. His interest in the Bayreuth Festival has yielded a collection of over 1500 examples of paper ephemera related to that institution.

Leonard is lovingly known for attention to detail, finding of the perfect prop or set decoration, raising the bar for the quality of craftsmanship, historic accuracy, and for his sardonic wit.

Both of these retired theatre artists spent a large portion of their lives at UNI as teachers and mentors of countless undergrad and graduate burgeoning theatre artists. In every region of the country, you can meet a professional actor, director, scholar, technician, or designer who will credit their success to the encouragement and care they received in their encounters with these amazing professors during their tenure at UNI.

THEATRE UNI NATIONAL ADVANCEMENT BOARD 2017

CRAIG COON (1994)

MICHAEL PEITZ (1970)

DICK DEVIN (1966)

SARAH RINNER (2000)

ANNE HEALY (1984)

RANDY STEFFEN (1997)

RONALD KELLER (1978)

ANDREA TONSFELDT (2000)

TOM NEVILLE (1983)

STEPHANIE WESSELS (2011)

JASON PALMQUIST (1993)

SARAH NOLL WILSON (2003)

WOULD YOU BE ONE OF THE **EDELNANT 200?**

If 200 people who hold a fond memory of Jay can each contribute \$100, this fund will reach maturity and can begin helping students soon.

Theatre UNI wishes to thank the members of our National Advancement Board for 100% participation in supporting the development of the Edelnant Theatre Enhancement Fund.

Once funded, this account will provide an annual scholarship of at least \$1000 as well as supporting costs students incur while completing internships.

If you are able to participate, please visit
<https://theatre.uni.edu/departments/about-us/support>.

SPOTLIGHT ON ACTING



MIKE GIESE

Mike Giese grew up in Dubuque, Iowa where he developed an interest in theatre at an early age. Upon graduating from Wahlert high school in 1996 and receiving a scholarship to attend UNI as a theatre performance major, he promptly dove into the progressive and immersive theatre community here that gave him his first real taste of what it means to be an actor and true theatre practitioner. Having studied during subsequent summers in New York City toward the end of his tenure at UNI at both

the Susan Grace Cohen Acting Studio and Circle In The Square summer intensives, it was a natural transition upon graduation from UNI in December of 2000 to move to NYC in January of 2001 where he hit the ground running in a musical adaptation of William Shakespeare's *Two Gentlemen Of Verona* produced by fellow UNI theatre alums' Key Theatre.

In September of 2001 he discovered what would become his professional and creative home in New York at The Barrow Group Theatre Company. A now 30 year old acting and producing institution off Broadway, it is where he has been honing his craft over the last nearly 17 years. Over those years Mike has been seen in numerous national network commercials for products such as Coca-Cola, Hellman's, New York Life Insurance and Dr. Scholl's. He appeared in *Grand Theft Auto V* as Fabien LaRouche, on television in *As The World Turns* and *Nurse Jackie*, in multiple short and feature length films, most recently *Life Hack* which

won the Audience Award for Best Feature at the San Diego International Film Festival. Further, he's been seen on stage regionally at the Penobscot Theatre in Bangor, Maine, off Broadway in various short and full length plays at The Barrow Group, most notably this past spring in Henrik Ibsen's *An Enemy Of The People*. While accomplishing all this Mike also married his college sweetheart, fellow UNI theatre alum Shannon Patterson, with whom he has two beautiful daughters.



LINDSEY CATRAMBONE



After graduating in December 2003 from UNI with a BA in Theatre Performance, I moved to Hollywood to pursue an on-camera acting career. Within a few months I was fortunate to book a union, on-camera commercial as "Female Golfer 1" (thrilling,) and joined the Screen Actor's Guild. It didn't take long to realize I didn't actually love being on-camera. So naturally, I started pursuing professional golf. Not what I had planned, but why not? However, when I heard about voiceover (VO) through a golf buddy of mine I thought I'd give it a shot.

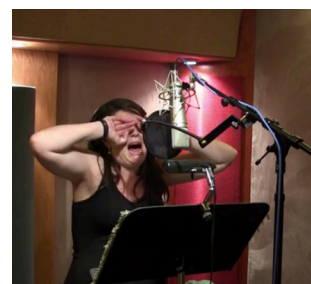
So, I invested in my new venture by signing up for as many classes as I could afford... one. My acting degree from UNI translated well to acting "behind the microphone" and I instantly fell in love with VO. After a year of classes, lots of networking,

and volunteering at a VO casting studio, a job in voiceover casting where I had been volunteering became available. Again, not necessarily what I had planned, but I jumped at the opportunity to work in the business in which I eventually wanted to perform. I met some of the most gifted VO talent in the business while I worked as a Voiceover Casting Director. I also had the opportunity to learn what the client (who does the hiring) is looking for and which talent they ultimately select to book the job. You can't learn any of THAT in a class. It was invaluable. Meanwhile, I was auditioning for VO jobs on my own time and finally, after two years, landed my first VO gig for Skechers. It was my only voiceover job that entire year! My next step was to cut my demo and get an agent. Once those steps were accomplished I thought I was on my way to make it big...

Five years later, I was finally able to quit my "day job" and actually make a living solely as a voice actor. I haven't looked back since! I've been fortunate to voice hundreds of commercials including campaigns for Toshiba, Proactiv, Fabletics, and Talking Stick Resort to name a few. I've also voiced promos for networks such as HBO, Cartoon Network, Disney Jr, NBC Sports, Music

Choice, and Nickelodeon. I've worked in multiple video games including *Grand Theft Auto V*. I've also voiced numerous animated characters such as Luna, the outdated, teenage smartphone (pictured - while 9 months pregnant), as well as a spunky shrimp named Alice in the newly released animated feature film "Deep." Ironically enough, I've also returned to doing on-camera commercial work again, and can currently be seen in a Groupon commercial airing all over the world as "Supermom 1."

I guess what I've learned through this almost 14 year journey is not to be too set on "my plan." As my great-grandfather always said, "If things don't go your way, they just may go a better way." I've also learned that on camera they cast real golfers and supermoms, but in voiceover I get to play a smartphone and a shrimp. I love that.



LUNA





ANTHONY SOIKE

Ironically, most of my convictions about what leads to “success” as an actor has little to do with acting and more to do with self. Anyone can get lucky booking a part here or there, or even a big role that launches a career, however I’m convinced that sustained “success” as an actor comes from strengthening yourself. Whether it’s intellectually through podcasts and books, strengthening your



foundation through therapy, or by expanding your horizons through creative fields or travels, you’re setting yourself up for the long haul. It’s not a journey of erroneous time commitments, expectations of self, or hopes of others, but one where the ups and downs are expected and where the hope is to reach a point where “success” as an actor doesn’t matter.

MIKE SCHMINKE

So, how did I get where I am now? After I graduated from UNI, I moved straight to Los Angeles, CA where I studied improv at the Upright Citizen’s Brigade. I then moved to Chicago, IL to study at the Second City. I graduated from their Improv Conservatory program and performed on their House Co. team for a year. After that program came to an end, I transitioned out of the improv community, got a TV/

commercial agent and started going on auditions. Since then I’ve done national voice over work, industrial, regional, and national commercials as well as film and TV work. I’m also taking classes as often as possible as it keeps me sharp and more connected with the acting community. I will be teaching a “Using Comedy in Commercial Auditions” class starting next year.



THE THEATRE IN YOU AN INTERACTIVE, DIGITAL TEXTBOOK

Associate Professor of Theatre, Stephen Taft was awarded a Professional Development Assignment during the spring 2017 semester. Although much of his time was spent focusing on the final development phase of his text, he also traveled to NYC and Los Angeles interviewing various professionals within the theatre and entertainment industry.

The Theatre in YOU is an interactive digital text book specifically designed for non-theatre majors. Due to the interactive nature of the text, Taft is hopeful students using the textbook to its fullest extent will have a greater understanding regarding the process of creating theatre, gain an appreciation of the creative and performing artists working in the industry, and understand how the art form is relevant to the student, not only in the here and now, but years after graduation. More importantly, it’s his hope that students will be able to use the knowledge they have gained in the class in their daily lives.

A primary inspiration has been Tony Wagner’s book, *Creating Innovators*. Wagner states: “Increasingly in this 21st century, what you know is far less important than what you can do with what you know.” However, Wagner also notes: “Knowledge is also essential in order to innovate. You need foundational information to be able to

discern what can and must be improved upon or changed.” The Theatre in YOU provides a foundational knowledge of theatre in order that the student may begin to recognize how such knowledge may be relevant to them on a personal level.

Real world examples from weddings to job interviews and athletics to politics form a basis of understanding in order that students may discover the relevancy of theatre in their lives. Eleven chapters provide a foundation of the art form with the flexibility for any professor using the text to incorporate their specific interests, expertise and experiences into the class.

The ability for students to read the text and then immediately seek illustration of a specific topic via industry professionals in the field with a click of a button was an initial attraction to Taft. “I’ve incorporated a number of excerpts from various conversations I’ve had with industry professionals including text, audio and video.” Students can access the full interviews on his website at: www.stevetaft.com. “I wanted to explore the journey of the working artist in the theatre, television and film industry that took that elusive first step after graduation and continued to work in their chosen industry years after they were college students. It’s my hope that UNI Theatre majors may visit my



website and discover the insights, perceptions, personal journeys and advice of these working artists to be valuable and inspiring.”

Interactive responses embedded within the digital textbook have been developed to increase student participation and to jumpstart classroom discussions. End of chapter flashcards are the norm to encourage students to study anytime and anywhere on any digital device. One final consideration for Taft was the cost of the textbook which is approximately half of a printed textbook. The Theatre in YOU is being piloted during the Fall 2017 semester and is published by Great River Learning of Dubuque, Iowa.



AN ACTOR'S PATH

CHRIS MCGAHAN

us to call it quits. It sucked. It was heartbreaking to let it go, to feel like I failed- my friends, my art, my school, and mostly myself. But! I was not to be deterred. I started working with other companies- directing, producing, honing my craft(s.) I was also fortunate enough to start booking commercials and industrial training films, and even a few small local features. I made some good friends, and connected strongly with some

people who would show up again in my life later on.

Then I went off to grad school in Hawaii. It was simultaneously the best and worst three years of my life. My personal life was falling apart- my very new marriage hit rocky ground very quick. We were facing money problems (Hawaii is NOT cheap.) There was a whirlwind of drama (the substantially-less-fun-off-stage-kind) happening in the department around us, and it was too easy to get sucked into it. I was facing casting challenges as well- no one at the school quite knew what to do with me. I wasn't a leading man, but I was too normal to be a character actor. But, suddenly, I was Hawaii's television IT boy. I booked roles on three shows back to back to back. I booked a role in a summer blockbuster. I was blowing up regional union radio commercials! And those wins made me realize that I needed to go to Hollywood. Not because it was the only choice, but because when someone suggested it, my heart or brain or....something *clicked* and I knew it was my right next step.

I want to be clear here: I didn't sweep Hollywood off its feet. I didn't show up here, and become a star overnight. I struggled. HARD. I had a job that was flexible, which was AWESOME. But, I knew next to no

one here (except for the incomparable Clint Clark, former BAP member and ultra-amazing UNI Alum.) I had no contacts. I was in the middle of a nasty divorce. I was alone. And booking jobs had been extraordinarily easy up until now. In Minneapolis? I booked the first commercial I auditioned for. In Hawaii, I booked a national network show within two weeks of my first audition (and managed to book a role before my grad school acting professor did!!) But LA is huge. And hard. And scary. My first year was just me adjusting to being here, and finding a support circle. My second was feeling overwhelmed and chasing down any and every lead to get me into a room. My third was recovering from burnout- I wasted so much energy on so many bad decisions, I didn't have anything left in the tank to carry me forward without a plan. So I sat down and made one. And when I had a plan, I started booking again. I got smarter. I got a better agent. I was asking the right people for help finally, doing the right workshops to get me in front of people who understood me. My social circle got bigger, and stronger, and they grew alongside me. My ego stopped getting in the way, and started helping me out- it kept me rooted in who I was, even when auditions and bookings were scarce. And speaking of scarcity, I finally stopped paying attention to it. The things I didn't have, the auditions I didn't book, the relationships that fell apart- focusing on the lack was an energy vacuum- the more I focused on what I didn't have, the bigger it got. So I just stopped looking at it. Nothing good ever came from caring about nots.

By year 4, I finally felt like I belonged here, like I was making progress to my next big level. This big, scary, challenging place felt like home. And now, as I keep on creeping towards being here for a decade, I've long since let go of the idea that my success were flukes, or that my next failure was the one

Here's the bulletpoint version:

1. Let the no's go.
2. Be smart- Hard work isn't valuable if it isn't efficient and the RIGHT work.
3. Persevere. You never lose until you stop fighting.
4. Celebrate your successes. Every single one. And then forget about them: Dwelling on yesterday's wins doesn't get you to the end of today's game.
5. Focusing on lack only generates more lack.

It's kind of hard to pinpoint how I got where I am- a lot of it was failures and loss and rejection. Successes too, definitely, but the failures were the things that took me from place to place. Skill, training, perseverance, and building good relationships are absolutely necessary to stay vital in this business. But luck sure helped me early on too.

After I graduated from UNI, I moved to Minneapolis. I did theatre, lots, and lots of theatre, and even started a company with a group of like-minded UNI grads. (BAP REPRESENT!) We fundraised, and fought, and used every connection we could to build something. But breakups, bad partnerships, ego, and ultimately a difference of vision meant it was time for

that would prove I should give up entirely. I go on avail probably once a month. (Avail is this weird film thing where they say “you’re on our very short list: hold the day but we still reserve the right to not use you up until the day before.”) I have offers for small projects regularly. I’ve booked 12 commercials in the last three years. I wrote some scripts that are being workshopped with agents and directors, trying to get them sold and produced. People occasionally recognize me in classes or at bars. Which is nice. But

even if they didn’t? It doesn’t matter. I’m happy with my trajectory. I haven’t hit my big goal yet, and that’s okay too- it means I have a reason to keep fighting, to keep becoming a bigger fish in this gargantuan pond. What motivates me has grown and changed and I have too.

So here I am. Great at failing; great at rejection. Excited and terrified and awe struck and lucky and lost and stupid and brilliant and HERE.

A LETTER FROM STEVE PALMQUIST

Greetings, Theatre UNI Alumni.

I came to Theatre UNI in the fall of 1976 as a graduate student under the tutelage of Stan Wood, D. Terry Williams, George Glenn and Harvey Sweet. My assistantship was to provide publicity and public relations. I was Stan’s stage manager for *The Madwoman of Chaillot* that fall. Unfortunately, Stan didn’t live to see the performances of that production, nor the construction and opening of the fine theatre that shares his name.

I write to you today as a member of the Board of Directors of the Friends of Theatre UNI (formerly S.T.A.G.E., Inc.) Theatre UNI changed the course of my life and enhanced its quality in countless ways. I’m sure that is true for each of you as well. While I would love to share some of my theatre stories with you and would

enjoy hearing yours, perhaps we can accomplish that in some other venue.

My plea is that you continue to engage with your Alma Mater (or re-engage if you have let that relationship lapse.) Our current crop of student actors, designers, and fledgling educators need our continuing support: attendance at their productions, scholarships, and other financial aid to enhance their education.

Why not become a Friend of Theatre UNI? The enrollment information may be found online at <https://theatre.uni.edu/departments/about-us/support>. Subscribe to the Theatre UNI season. Or you may wish to contribute to the newly formed Jay Edelnant Theatre Enhancement Fund. My classmate, colleague and friend John Karbula has created a special endowment to

underwrite future theatre educators with scholarships. Bravo, Mr. Superintendent.

In the next few years the National Advancement Board will charter a plan to update the Strayer-Wood Theatre to better serve 21st Century needs. Anticipate that exciting chapter and plan to contribute. If you use social media, check out FaceBook pages “Theatre UNI Buddies”, “Strayer-Wood Theatre”, etc. Feel free to contact Eric Lange, other faculty members, or Friends board members.

We are family.

Steve Palmquist, MA 1977
stevenpalmquist@yahoo.com

CAREER PROFILE: CYNTHIA GOATLEY

At the end of the Fall 2017 semester, Dr. Cynthia Goatley will retire from a 27-year career at UNI. During that time, she has established an impressive record of quality teaching, research and creative activity, including the completion of several original theatrical scripts.

She is a member of the Dramatists Guild and The Playwright's Center (Minneapolis). She received the Regents' Award for Faculty Excellence in 2002 and the College of Humanities and Fine Arts (CHFA) Faculty Excellence Award in 2007. Additionally, Dr. Goatley was twice chosen as a Fulbright Scholar, completing work with the University of Gdansk in Poland, where she directed *Crimes of the Heart* for the Maybe Theatre Company.



As the recipient of multiple Summer Fellowships, PDA's, and Iowa Arts Council grants, she has been enabled to complete multiple writing projects, and to work passionately to workshop these productions; most often in a setting which includes UNI students and community members. During one such assignment she completed the libretto for a one-act opera about explorer Isabella Bird. One of her earlier scripts,

A Sudden Loss of Altitude, was produced by Theatre UNI in 1997.

On multiple occasions, shows that she directed received affirmation from the Kennedy Center/American College Theatre Festival:

- Meritorious Achievement in Directing (*On the Verge*, 2011)
- Meritorious Achievement in Directing (*The Laramie Project*, 2002)
- Meritorious Achievement in Directing (*The Singular Life of Albert Nobbs*, 2000)

In 2011, She was selected from over 120 applicants to attend a one-week intensive workshop for professional directors in Chicago. The Director's Lab, Chicago is affiliated with the Lincoln Center Director's Lab in NYC.

Cynthia is a consummate researcher and insists on providing her actors with a strong dramaturgical founding from which to work.

At UNI, Cynthia has regularly contributed to Honors coursework and has consistently been recognized for rigorous and high-quality teaching in Acting, Playwriting, Directing, and specialized coursework such as Feminist Theatre.

Most recently, Dr. Goatley and her collaborator, Rebecca Burkhardt, guided the world premiere of their original musical based on the life of Texas Governor Ann Richards: *Just Ann*. A local reviewer spoke accurately in saying:

"A rousing, inspiring, musically and theatrically exciting new musical. Cynthia Goatley deftly unfolds Richards' life through a series of revealing vignettes that move about in time."



Earlier, she developed (also in conjunction with Rebecca Burkhardt) a musical entitled *The Misses Pirie and Woods* (current title *Scotch Verdict*) which received a concert performance at the Theatre Building Chicago, in Chicago, IL. Her play for youth, *Catching Butterflies*, was commissioned by Theatre Wybrzeze in Poland and received performances in Sacramento, CA and in Cedar Falls, IA.

And, Cynthia has been featured as a performer in Theatre UNI productions, including *Noises Off* in 1998 and *August: Osage County* in 2014. In her final semester, Cynthia is portraying the title role in our production of *Mother Courage and her Daughters*. It is perhaps fitting, given Cynthia's high achievement across multiple areas of the theatre, that as she concludes her academic career she is taking on the performance of one of theatre's most epic roles. As has always been the case, Cynthia has no doubt used the process of inhabiting this role to further educate our students about professional practice and craft.

Cynthia plans to retire in Santa Fe, New Mexico, where she and her wife, Rebecca Burkhardt—who is the conductor of the Northern Iowa Symphony Orchestra and has collaborated frequently with theatre UNI—own a home.

Godspeed, Cynthia!



ALUMNI PROFILES: TORI REZAK (2012)

understanding of technical theatre as well as strong communication skills.

As you were applying and working in different companies, how did your tasks and responsibilities differ, and how were they similar?

Going from the costume shop to the marketing and development office may seem like a strange leap, but the mind set required by a stitcher or draper is not dissimilar to that required of an administrator. Working with designers and directors, the final costume is the goal; the technician pulls apart the design into its component pieces. Similarly, I now work with the administrative staff to develop our long-term goals for ticket sales and fundraising, then work backwards to develop a plan of attack to meet those goals. At one time I focused on the details of each stitch in a costume, now I focus on the details of engaging language, timed mailings, and exciting imagery. Something that has never changed—despite my different companies and titles—is working with people and making sure all parties have what they need to do the best they can. I spend way more time at a computer than a sewing machine these days (though I do sometimes get drafted to help with alterations and craft builds,) but the ability to break down a final product into its component parts while maintaining clear communication has remained constant throughout my career.

When did you decide to pursue your MA and MBA, and what was that process like for you?

I knew I wanted to pursue grad school while I was finishing up at UNI. I attended URTAs and toured various design programs while I was working in California, but I was also still managing Sissy's Circus from across the country. My co-founders and I were considering what it might take to make the Circus an official non-profit, but none of us quite knew how to achieve that. It was around that time that I discovered

Arts Administration was a career option. I had spoken to PCPA's Production Manager, and decided I needed more training—specifically on the business side—if I wanted to found a company. When I began applying for Arts Admin programs two years later, I was looking for schools that offered both the business training I needed with an arts-specific focus. I considered Columbia College in Chicago, American University in DC, and the Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music (CCM) at the University of Cincinnati.

How did you decide/narrow down your choice for a master's program?

Before officially applying to any of these schools, I visited each city, toured the campuses, and met with faculty and students. Physically visiting each school was extremely important to me. I would be moving somewhere completely new, completely on my own, and that new city might be where I stayed for a long time. I had to at least feel at home in this new place. I also knew that I did not want to pursue a four year program, and that the cost of living and tuition would be a big factor. Ultimately, I was looking for the biggest bang for my buck. How much could I achieve in the shortest time with the smallest amount of money? CCM became my top pick because I could get two masters in two years, and they offered a full tuition waiver with a Graduate Assistantship. Additionally, the cost of living in Cincinnati was not much higher than that in Des Moines, and the city was entering a revitalization phase with several arts organizations redefining their place in the community.

What advice do you have for current students and others as they are looking for work and companies to work with, or considering grad school?

This might be the MBA talking, but jobs and grad school are both a big investment—of your time, your energy, your sanity, and your money. Think hard about what you

What jobs have you held that helped prepare you for the position you are in now?

I've held a few different jobs that have helped me prepare for my job as External Relations Officer for Theater Aspen. Theatre Aspen is a small company and our staff members all wear several different hats. My work in undergrad was based around costume design and production. Working in UNI's costume shop as a TA during undergrad and then in the costume shop at the Pacific Conservatory for Performing Arts (PCPA) in California of course strengthened my costume-specific training, but those jobs also gave me a holistic understanding of the technical and performing elements of mounting a show. While I was still at UNI, I also co-founded the drag and burlesque troupe Sissy's Circus: I served as their president for 4 years, designed costumes, planned tours, and managed marketing and fundraising efforts. Running that troupe gave me a taste for working in a more administrative capacity. After undergrad, I worked as a corporate and social event planner in Des Moines. That job exposed me to LOTS of different personalities and taught me how to be patient in challenging situations, calm under fire, and how to manage the expectations of clients and fellow staff members. Event planning is just a different form of theatre—there are lots of moving parts, and communication is key. In my current position, I manage marketing, fundraising, front of house, and event rentals. Ensuring the ease of purchasing a ticket and attending a show, connecting donors' interests with the company's needs, and negotiating contracts with event clients all require a thorough

stand to gain from applying for a specific company or school. If you tour, you'll get to travel the world, but you probably won't see your family for a while. If you take an office job, you might have more stability and predictable work hours, but you might be bored working at a desk. Know your priorities and personal goals, and keep them in mind as those exciting offers come in!

How have your goals and interests shifted since graduation? (from undergrad and grad school?)

My goals and interests have clarified since graduation from UNI. I inadvertently co-founded a company when I was 20. At the time I was just interested in creating something fun with my friends, but that project inspired me to one day found an interdisciplinary arts incubator. Pursuing grad school gave me the basis to lead such an organization, and working at Theatre Aspen is honing those skills. In addition to founding a company, I also want to ensure that it is a creative and supportive environment for staff and artists.

How has theatre changed for you now that you work on the marketing/developing side of the stage?

Working on the marketing and development side of the stage allows me to experience theatre from the audience's view point. While the creatives, technicians, and performers tell the tale on stage, I help craft the theatregoer's personal experience. From the first ad you see in the newspaper, to a call to the box office, to cultivating donors and long-time allies for the theatre—all of those pieces create an individualized experience that can impact a huge number of people. If I'm attending a show at another theatre, I'm looking for similar things as an audience member. Though my lens may have shifted a little, I still love to be taken away by a theatre production. Theatre is still magic, even though I know the secrets to most of the tricks.

What advice do you have for current students in school?

The class you hate the most might be the most important one you ever take. I'm going to be honest: I hated my UNI acting class. The professor and my classmates were great, I just didn't see why I had to take acting when I was focused on production. I'd never audition for a show, and I hated being on stage. Now, I act every day. Whether I'm dealing with a

distraught audience member or out to lunch with a high-end donor, focusing on the other allows me to be fully present and enables me to adjust to any situation. In grad school, I hated my e-marketing class. Now I help manage a website and social media. Go to that class you hate. Eventually you'll be glad you did.

Find people you love to work with and hold on to them. The people you're living and working with now will probably continue to be part of your life well beyond college. If you work in theatre, you're sure to cross paths at one time or another. If you've found someone you respect and enjoy working with, an opportunity may eventually arise for you to work together again. Keep in touch, watch their careers bloom, and send them a Facebook message every so often. When a position opens up that they'd be perfect for, get them back on your team!

Go big. Teachers say it all the time: this is a safe place to try and fail. Go big with your tries. If you find yourself thinking "What the hell am I doing? Can I really pull this off?", then you're probably on the right path.

What do you find exciting about your current position?

The people I work with and the small size of the organization make my job exciting. I have the pleasure of working on a team of insanely talented people. Every day I get to see them kick ass at their jobs, and we often get to kick ass together. We produce huge shows in a tent that gets torn down every winter. Sitting in that house, though, you could easily believe you're in a regional theatre in a major city. I'm really proud of the work Theatre Aspen does. We make magic, and it's really fun.

What's the most challenging part about your job?

The most challenging thing about my job is the summer schedule. I am a team of one managing four departments. The days get long, and the weekends never really come until the season closes. Though it's a lot of work, I get to spend that time in one of the most beautiful places in the country with some of my favorite people.

Thank you and all the best!
Tori Rezek

External Relations Officer
Theatre Aspen



ALUMNI PROFILES: LEIGHANN WESTERMEYER (2016)

What advice do you have for current students and others as they are looking for work and companies to work with?

Look for the companies that care about their employees, talk to the instructors, former students, current students and see where they went and how they liked it. But also trust your gut, if it the company feels off to you your gut is probably right about it.

together and find a solution. At Walnut Street the bigger projects were more of a team effort because of the size of the set and the time crunch.

As you wrap up another season and start on something new, what are your new goals and ideas for the next big thing?

My goal for this year is to expand my experience in every area that I can so I can apply it in future projects. After I am finished with the season at Riverside I plan to find work as a props artisan.

Where are you going in Florida?

Vero Beach, Florida

What will you be working on?

I will be working on shows such as *Hank Williams: Lost Highway*, *Mamma Mia*, *Gypsy*, *A Christmas Story*, and many more!

What advice do you have for current students still in school?

My advice for current students is to take every opportunity, learn all that you can, and know your worth.

As someone who began to work with professional theatre companies right away, what was that process like for you?

Going from a theatre where we work a few hours a day and classes in between to working a full day in the shop is really nice. You aren't being pulled away to work on homework or work on other projects and you're able to put all your time and energy into the work that you love!

How was your experience with the Walnut Street Theatre, and what were some of your responsibilities and tasks?

I had a great experience at the Walnut Street Theatre. I learned so much—many new techniques—and much much more! As the apprentice it was my responsibility to assist painting the main stage shows, along with the Studio shows—but the kid shows were my direct responsibility. I would discuss them with the paint charge and come up with a plan—there was often a time crunch and I would usually get help on those shows.

How have your goals and interests shifted since graduation?

After working in a professional theatre, I decided to start working in props. I realized that I have always been a bit more well-rounded in the different departments and decided that props would be a better fit for me. I still love to paint but I missed the woodworking aspect.

What jobs have you had that helped prepare you for the position you are in now?

The experience I got while working at the Gallagher Bluedorn Performing Arts Center and the experience I got from being a paint charge for a few shows my last year really helped prepare me for the jobs that I have now. At GBPAC touring shows come in and you get to meet the crew that once started in the position you are in. Being able to chat with them and learn what their work life is like is very valuable. You also learn how these Broadway shows are set up, taken down, and everything in between—that only helps you as a builder and designer. Being the paint charge showed me what it was like to be in a higher position which included conversions that I would have with designers, scheduling work hours, making a plan and scheduling to get everything done on time.

As you were applying and working in different companies, how did your tasks and responsibilities differ, and how were they similar?

With switching departments this year some of my tasks changed and some are similar. Both apprenticeships have the apprentices take charge of some of the smaller shows for us to get more experience in a higher position. At Riverside Theatre, I will have more responsibilities building the bigger props. If we are stuck on a project, we work

THOUGHTS ON RETURNING

KATY SLAVEN

BY KATY SLAVEN

I graduated from UNI in May 2010 with a BA in Theatre: Performance-Acting, then earned my MFA in Acting from Florida Atlantic University in May 2015. In the Spring of 2017, I was hired to teach three classes at UNI: Foundations of Theatre, Theatrical Arts and Society, and Acting. This fall I am teaching Theatrical Arts and Society and Intro to Reading Playscripts, and in the spring I will return to teach Acting.

Here are my top ten favorite things about teaching at UNI as an alum:

#10 Familiarity

I already know how to get around campus. Not only does this help in terms of efficiency (not to mention confidence), but everywhere I go, I get to relive some incredible memories.

#9 Parking!

I can't even explain how wonderful this is. Only once you have experienced the insanity of competing for spots in CP, C, or B lots can you truly appreciate parking in an A lot. I imagine this is what flying first class feels like, and I'll never be able to go back.

#8 Relating to the students

I remember what it was like to be a UNI student. I even know what it was like to have many of the professors that current UNI students have for their theatre classes. It reminds me it wasn't that long ago. And yet...

#7 Seeing the progress

So much has changed since I was a student here! There are at least half a dozen new faces on faculty and staff. The curriculum is different. The facilities have been updated! The Strayer-Wood even has a gender-neutral restroom in the lobby! It's amazing how much can happen in just a few years.

#6 Everyone is so welcoming

My former professors regularly take time out of their day to stop by my office and chat with me, colleague to colleague. The professors who weren't here when I was a student reach out to me too, and tell me they are really glad I'm here. I don't think they know how much it means to me!

#5 Perspective

Teaching the classes I once took helped me develop a greater appreciation for what my professors put into their jobs, and what they put up with from students! (i.e. "Read the Damn Play!" – Jay Edelnant)

#4 I've never been a better student

I was always a pretty good student, but my drive then was nothing compared to what it is now. In my experience, being the person in charge means I never get to skip class, tune out, fall asleep, or show up late or unprepared. I am a leader and a role model whether I want to be or not!

#3 Appreciating opportunities

UNI is constantly reaching out to me with growth opportunities. The Theatre Department is always offering ways for me to get even more involved: adjudicating acting juries, going on field trips with students to see plays, facilitating talkbacks, attending leadership conferences, taking technology classes, etc. I have tried to snap up as many of these opportunities as possible.

#2 Carrying on a legacy

Every lesson I teach is an amalgamation of my own original thoughts and the nuggets of wisdom I have picked up from my teachers over the years. It's inspiring to teach alongside the very professors who guided me in my formative years. They continue to teach me and influence me whether they realize it or not.

#1 Making an impact

The goal was to teach theatre in college. The dream was to be the kind of professor I valued the most when I was a student, the kind who works tirelessly, genuinely cares about the students, and does everything they can to help them achieve their potential. My students have reached out to me—emails, hand-written letters, sometimes in person during office hours—to let me know how much they loved my class or how I inspired or influenced them. This brings a smile to my face and tears to my eyes.

Iowa Theatre Artist and Educator

I stay pretty busy with work! Besides UNI, I teach at Coe College in Cedar Rapids, Hawkeye Community College in Waterloo, Nolte Academy in Coralville, and Theater Cedar Rapids. About once a year (sometimes twice) I make time for an acting project. In 2016, I did a national tour of a play called *Out of Bounds*. In 2017, I did *A View from the Bridge* by Arthur Miller. In 2018, I will be doing *Detroit* by Lisa D'Amour at Riverside Theatre in Iowa City. I work in other areas of theatre as well, including dialect coaching and directing.

For more information about me, please visit www.katherineslaven.com.

GARY KELLEY

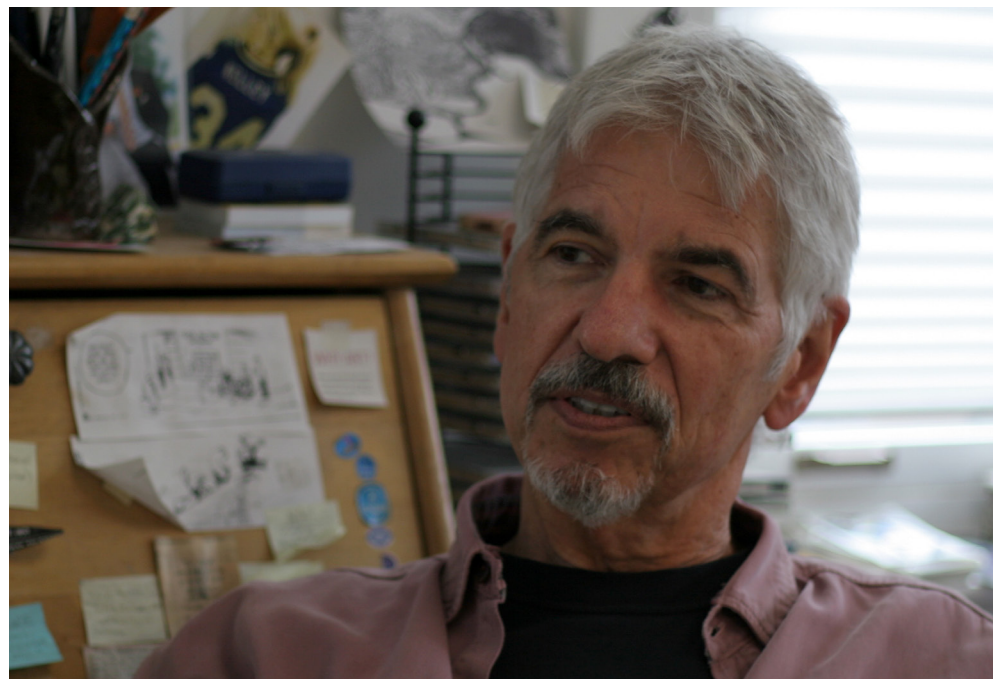
POSTER RETROSPECTIVE

The process: how do you go about finding inspiration after you've talked with directors, companies, other designers, etc.?

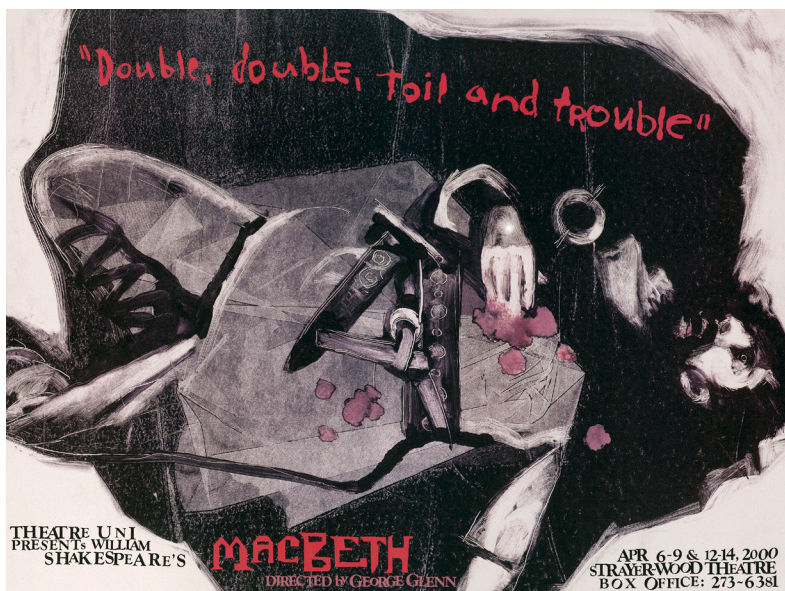
It all depends on the project. For Theatre UNI's production of *Hair*, I can pull from my memories, because I lived during the Age of Aquarius. I was around when *Hair* was around the first time. I use visual inspirations as my jumping off point, like old photos, art styles, clothing and hair styles and patterns. Research is a big part of it for me. You don't want to get too complicated. **You have to find a focus, that's the key.** Whether that's one figure or interactive figures, you don't want to create a scene from a play, you want to find a metaphor for the story and music. In this case, it may be a simple figure or two, I don't know yet.

What do you want viewers to take away from your work?

One really important thing for me to do is to seduce the viewer to read between the lines. In other words, what's going on in this image that I don't quite understand by just looking at the poster, but obviously has to do with the story line? I don't want to just hit people between the eyes with the most obvious image of the production. I want to take people back to that time, first of all. I want the nostalgia to be there, that's important I think. There's a bit of subtext of information (reading between



the lines.) I'll let the storyline lead the imagery of the poster a little bit, but it's not about telling the story on the poster. I don't want to repeat what's been done, I want to create our own version. I love projects that prompt me to get into the subject matter and create something new and fresh.



First projects/posters? National Awards?

1980, for Dee Terry Williams. It was a seasonal poster. I did a few show specific posters, but the majority were seasonal posters. I did his posters at Western Michigan when he moved there, too. The first UNI poster was a view of the new Strayer-Wood Theatre, I was really taken by the architecture from that point of view. The second one was a harlequin sort of design; both of these were challenging and fun projects to do. These posters were important for my career because they were the first major awards I won at the New York Society of Illustrators. I won two years in a row, and they were both for Theatre UNI posters. The first poster I did for Theatre UNI won a gold medal. I was thrilled. To win the top award in the most prestigious illustrator show in the country was huge for me. They put the image on the cover of the catalog of the entire show. These posters were spring boards for my career. These are fun projects to do because there isn't a lot of art direction. The client

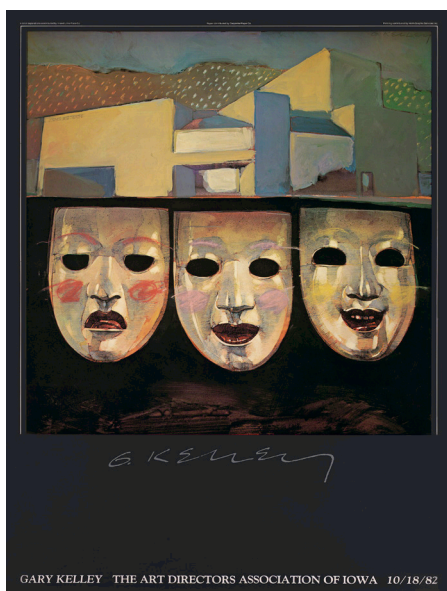
isn't telling me what they want. They're trusting me to interpret it, whether it's the entire season or a specific play.

I studied graphic design and art at UNI. I always enjoy the projects where I get to be the designer as well as the illustrator, especially with posters. They're big, bold, sometimes simple and direct.

Other projects:

I do a wide variety of work, and that's the way I like it.

It's a really eclectic range of clients and projects I work on. I'm kind of all over the place. I do a lot of paintings for people. I did a lot of work for *Rolling Stone* over the years. Most of the projects were portraits. I worked for *Playboy*. I do a lot of picture books for young readers, and also produce work for Google Murals, Roundabout Theatre in New York, and theatres in Iowa City.



Poster design for *Hair*